

## [The Street]

No. 1 [?]

Approximately 10,000 words

SOUTH CAROLINA WRITERS' PROJECT

LIFE HISTORY

TITLE: THE STREET

Date of Writing March, 1939

Names of Persons Interviewed 1 - Robert Moultrie

2 - Emma Moultrie

3 - John Lands

4 - Bertha Lands

5 - Isaiah Washington Pinckney

6 - Josephine Johnson

Fictitious Name 1 - Robert Carter

2 - Sarah Carter

3 - John Sanders

4 - Bessie Sanders

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5 - Sundown

6 - Eva Bellows

Place Arundel Plantation,

Georgetown, S.C.

Occupation 1 - Preacher, Farmer, Guide

2 - Cook

3 - Farm Hand, Guide

4 - Housewife

5 - Farm Hand

6 - Cook

Name of Writer Margaret Wilkinson

Project 1655

Margaret Wilkinson,

Charleston, S. C.

Life History

“ THE STREET ”

How you get to Barondel Plantation is your own affair. The ordinary mode of transportation today is by automobile. Ten years ago you would most likely have made the trip by boat,

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for even reasonably passable roads were unheard of in South Carolina low-country until its many rivers were recently spanned by steel bridges.

This former flourishing rice plantation is fifteen miles by land from Georgetown, a town of five thousand inhabitants.

To reach the plantation from Georgetown you travel seven miles over hard surfaced highways and another seven over a maze of "neighborhood roads". These are narrow, rutted swampy at intervals, winding and banding through pinelands, deep wood, swamps, or uncultivated fields overgrown in sedge grass, wild flower, or shrub.

Along the road you pass an occasional dwelling standing in a clearing of furrowed land, encompassed by sleezy fences. To the experienced eye, a wisp of smoke along the skyline, or well-beaten paths leading deeper into the pinelands or fields, disclose the proximity of Negro cabins, in what seems to be totally barren acres. Here subsists a shadowy population whose method of livelihood remains a mystery even to whites with years of familiarity with the situation.

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After riding for several miles beyond the last roadside dwelling through land given over entirely to the natural flora, a neatly painted sign reading "Barondel Plantation", - black lettering on white background, directs you to turn sharply to the right into a road not unlike the one you are on. It is no better kept. The ditches on either side are deeper. The rounded imprint of the shovel against the sides shows that this road is hand-worked and but newly cleared. It is a part of the plantation "Avenue."

The deep ditches answer a pressing need for drainage, for the sign heads you directly to the great Pee Dee River only a mile distant. The Pee Dee and its three sister rivers, whose confluence forms [Winyah?] Bay, together with the Santee are responsible for the thousands of acres of fertile rice lands, now waste, to which Georgetown county once owed its great wealth and still owes its beautiful plantations. For the most part these

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plantations are owned by absentee landlords who utilize them as game preserves or winter residences.

Half a mile down the Barondel Avenue an enormous red gate made of heavy timber halts you. for it is firmly barred. It closes a high white picket fence, the palings of which are entwined with honeysuckle and Jessamine vines, and at whose footing kneel dwarf palmettoes and Spanish Bayonet.

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But it is the massive round gate posts that will project themselves past your sense of sight into your inner consciousness. They are hand-carved in a design classis in its simplicity using acorns as a motif. You have been told that they are one hundred and fifty years old and that they are the work of slave artisans-black men then but recently snatched from the Ivory Coast. You have read all the stories about the slave ships.

The gate moves and swings open as if by magic, but no one comes into sight. The day of the black genie seemed still here.

The vista discloses a wider continuation of the "Avenue" flanked on either side by a row of live oaks half a mile long, doubtless the same trees that had supplied the models from which the craftsman of another century had made his design. The Avenue ends at a white house of majestic proportions set like a jewel in a mass of green.

In the foreground on the day of my visit stood an ancient one-horse wagon with a home-made body upon which rested a large willow clothes basket. A sleek, buxom, self-complacent looking mule/ stood between the shafts. The driver had opened the gate. He had shyly stood out of sight behind its cover. When he did emerge, he turned away his head so his face could not be seen.

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The figure was dressed in blue denim overalls and several motley old coats, one on top of the other, all in various stages of disintegration and from which hung an irregular fringe of tatters. Despite the fact that the day was not overly cold, these coats were topped by the upper portion of a Clemson College officer's dress uniform resplendent with brass buttons and gold braid. A cadet cap, visored, leaned against the wind atop the wearer's head, which bobbed as he mumbled incoherently an ejaculation intended in way of greeting.

After I had passed through the gate, he led his mule through holding the reins in his hand. Then he closed and barred it carefully, mounted the driver's seat, cracked a long leather whip like a Roman charioteer. "Mary Mule" responded. The strange outfit with its peerless driver, Isaiah Washington Wilson, A "natural" colloqually known as "Sundown", dashed at terrific speed along the opposite end of the Avenue leaving a swirl of dust in its wake.

The wagon clatter fades into a rumble. On either side, beyond the Avenue lie fallow fields. Among withered corn stalks ribboned into shreds by the elements stand twenty or more scrub long-horned cattle; scions of a noble breed the planter in better times had introduced from the far West. They are trying to pick fodder from the corn stalks stubs, for here, in the case of cattle as of human beings, it is often 5 a case of "Live, horse, and in the Spring there will be grass."

Ahead a barbed wire fence three plies high drawn a line of demarkation between the field where the cattle graze and a park of handsome live oaks some twenty acres in extent. Here also a smaller road branches off from the Avenue skirting the park. This leads to "the Street", or the negro quarters.

Barondel's "Street" has been kept intact to a greater extent than that of any other plantation in Georgetown County, though many houses have been burned down or torn down in order to get material for other plantation activities or for repairing the remaining houses. Still the general plan has been preserved. There is a row of houses on either side where there was formerly a double row, The "Sick House" is at the end nearest the "Big

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House", the overseer's cottage adjacent, and the watchman's camp built high at a vantage point on the bluff that overlooks the river.

A nurse, practical and black rather than "trained", once presided over the "Sick House" to which were sent to be cared for all the ailing Negroes. It is now given over to storage space for pecans and sleeping quarters for Chauffeurs of "paying guests" who come to the "Big House" throughout the winter season. The overseer's cottage, snuggling in a clump of nandina, pyrocantha, and cassina, is furnished for winter rentals to visiting northerners. In the watchman's camp, where a guard once stood with a gun, are kept under supervision of the colored foreman, 6 the plantation tools and lighter farming implements.

To the left of the "Camp" is the ancient [style?] that leads over the hedge and fence into the "Big House" park. Overlooking the river to the right are the long barns with red roofs, an elongated shed filled with all manner of vehicles past being of use, and the "Lot", where the domestic animals are kept at night. Beyond this group, down the river and on its banks are the pig stys. [??]

The Negro quarters proper are situated within sight of, but out of calling distance from the "Big House. The Negroes like their privacy, so this arrangement is logical enough.

Scattered sheep, some sixty in number, grazing in and about the "Street", flock together at sight of the visitor, hurdle empty air, and disappear into the depths of the oak park beyond. The whitewashed cabins present a charm of another era. This is exchaned by the delapidated state of steps, porches, and roof. Made of ten inch cypress boards running perpendicularly, in a style of architecture in keeping with their purpose and setting, the cabins seem indestructible rather than in a good state of preservation.

A visit to one of the most imposing of them is revealing. The first one on the "Street", is the residence of the Reverend Robert Carter and his wife, Sarah. There are gingerbread decorations around the eaves like a story book 7 house, with cathedral windows and

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doorway. Above it towers one of the most massive of the live oaks forming a canopy of green with gray draperies of moss.

Behind the cabin a patched-together board and sapling fence hides the yard even in winter behind red-berried cassina, holly and fig trees, but judging from the cackles, squeals, and grunts that issue from its close, it serves a definite purpose. Four or five wanton fryers thin enough to have squeezed through the holes, scratch industriously in a flower bed among geraniums. To the side, rear, a crude shed covered with tar paper offers shelter to a relic "T" Model Ford with over patched shoes.

All but one of the wooden shutters of the cabin are closed as is the door, but wide cracks furnish unwished for ventilation to the apartment within. A single glass paned window sash is evident where the shutters have been left open. It is the only glass window in the house and is a rare luxury. Smoke rises from the chimney. The sweet odor of burning oak wood pervades the air.

There is little inside to fulfil the promise set forth by the romantic setting of the cabin. The high ceilinged room which you enter after cautiously picking your way up five or six wobbly steps and through the cathedral doorway, would be cheerless indeed except for the glow from the oaken embers within the ample fireplace of old English brick a type much wanted by Charleston architects. An open doorway straight ahead discloses a short dark hall indicating that a room or two leads off from it. On the hearth in the main room are some cooking utensils blackened with charcoal from many a tree, a coffee pot with grounds left from the morning meal, a "kettle" on a tripod with steam rolling from the spout, a skillet in which corn pone is baking, a pot of collards, and, as a special treat, a second skillet of cat-fish stew. This fish is not the delectable blue cat of the southern rivers that empty into the gulf but an inferior "yellow cat" not acceptable to sportsmen but held as a delicacy by colored fishermen. A mound of ashes heaped in the outer corner of the fireplace suggest "yams". The meal is ready when "Rev" shall arrive, a time never very definite, for "Rev" is a man of parts.

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The table is laid for two over a red print cloth. At each place a plate is turned down over a bone-handled knife, fork, and plated spoon. Heavy white porcelain cups and saucers are stacked on the table. The center-piece is a well conditioned nickle [Alladin?] reading lamp with an opaque glass shade.

The walls of the room are covered with newspapers, the bold black captions of The New York Times interspersed with brown rotogravure and colored plates from women's magazines. Heavy watermarks indicate a badly leaking roof.

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On one of the side walls are enlargements in heavy gilt frames of an elderly couple, the man bespeckled and pompous, the woman of passive countenance. The mantelpiece is covered over with a brown paper scarf ornate with artful cutout designs. On it stands an open faced wooden clock.

Other than straight chairs, braced with whittled pieces of wood and reinforced with cane seating, the furnishings of the room are a sideboard of golden oak groaning under decorative glassware of variegated hues from the red of the goblets to the deep blue of a large bowl, an old sofa covered with gay cretonne, a single rocking chair, and a table placed beside this and beneath the window with the glass pane. On the table is a vase with a spray of pear blossom, a rusty leather backed Bible thickened with much use, and a recent issue of The Literary Digest.

A couple of small goods boxes, one bearing a trademark and a label "Shur Shot Shells," stand before the fire to serve as stools. Upon one of these sits a winsome little pickaninny with skin of a creamy chocolate and brown eyes that dance. Neat and seemingly interminable braids cover her head. A red ribbon bow substantiates the impression induced by her coyness that she is a girl. The "Grand" with an air of an epicure is attacking a thick cold biscuit which has a hole punched in it and then filled with syrup. She is a picture of contentment.

Through a door to the right - obviously a bed room from a glimpse of the iron bed with the clean white spread - emerges a Negro woman, majestic in statue and bearing, broad of hip and shoulder. Her blue and white figured calico dress is freshly laundered. Its full gathered skirt stands out, supported by innumerable petticoats.

The woman's face beams at sight of the visitor. She holds out her hand and shakes hands awkwardly but sincerely. "Maum" Sarah, after welcoming you, remonstrates with the chubby "Grand" for her lack of manners in not having said "How d'y" and attempts to put her through the approved routine with the only result that bare toes dig into pine flooring, and the gay little head catapults from a jerky bob into a shy droop, biscuit intact the while.

"Maum" Sarah excuses the tot's lack of manners.

"She's mine and Rev's eyeball on account o' her being Boy's first born, but maybe she'll git over bein' so spoiled when the next 'un comes. Boy's wife is on the run ag'in already, maybe it'll be a boy this time and this one won't git so much attention."

"Boy" is "Maum" Sarah and Robert's only son and the last of their children to be married and leave the parental roof. The Carter's have brought up their children for the most part in the Barondel "Street" to which they came from 11 the street of Rosebank, the adjoining plantation, when the hereditary owners of Barondel returned from an unsuccessful venture into the town.

A family of only three children is sufficiently small to cause comment among country Negroes, a social strata where birth control has not ever been heard of much less practised. The Carter's small family may be explained by the fact that the head of the house is a member of what might be termed the black intelligensia. He remained single until well up in life content with doing his ministerial work in an atmosphere where his personal and professional popularity fore-stalled any possibility of loneliness.

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"Maum" Sarah is no common Negro. In the first place she belongs to a long line of house servants. In the second place she is descended from Negroes belonging to the Allstons, a family noted for generations for procuring only the finest type of Negro obtainable and training them accordingly.

Robert Carter's father had died of "de fever" when he was a very small boy. Soon afterwards, his mother, crossing a foot-bridge as she was returning home from a day's work in the rice fields lost balance and was drowned in the muddy waters of Jericho Creek.

The orphaned urchin, Robert, was taken into the household of Sam White, Deacon of the Nehemiah Baptist Church and Grand Master of the most influential lodge in the county.

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From constant attendance at the church in the deacon's company, adopting him as a pattern, the boy early displayed a lucidity of language richly embossed with Biblical names and lyrical phrases. The "brethren" and "sisters" marveled, their astonishment grew, and the deacon concluded that little Rob originally destined as one more field hand should become a preacher of the Gospel when he grew up. So that Robert speaks literally when he tells you that he was "called" to the ministry.

Little Robert's benefactor went ahead from day to day with preparations to point him for the holy profession. These were simple enough - a combination of preachment and teaching that established the child in the habit of daily walking in the way of the church elders. The deacon as a child had learned to read and do simple sums. In these subjects he instructed an apt pupil. They would sit together in the quiet of the evening just before "dusk dark" after a day of labor in the rice fields. Mostly they read from the Bible, the child spelling out with great effort to the aged man the long hard words.

Robert was not simply a scholar. He learned to combine hard physical work with activity of the mind. He splintered the tough lightards and brought in the heavy oak logs often

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tugging with greater might than was his. He did his assigned tasks in the fields. He liked best being allowed to go into rice fields through the intricacies of the drainage ditches or being sent to mind the birds from the newly planted corn in the uplands when he could lie in ambush between the furrows and “play dead” with a pile of clods beside him.

But there was play, After he was too old to ride a stick through the street or bend down a sapling for a hobby horse with the other children, he was happy to fish for sun perch or paddle the boat for the deacon when he “bobbed” for trout in the creeks and waterways. Then he learned to handle a gun and shoot game birds. In a few minutes at certain seasons one could procure a bag full of “coots”, (a small and delicious rice bird) without the use of a gun for they were so thick that they could be knocked from a bush with a stick.

From these childhood experiences arose the vocations of the man - preacher, hunter, fisherman, watchman, farmer, at each of which he works industriously in its season, each a separate entity calling for various talents, and each standing him in good stead as a means of a livelihood. Because of this versatility, the Carter family continue to hold heads high among their brethren, most of whom are fighting a losing battle with the wolf since the decline of the rice industry and the general impoverishment of the countryside agriculturally.

Robert considers himself first and foremost a preacher, a Baptist preacher. He would not like being mistaken for a Methodist. Though this work is his most important, it is by no means the most lucrative. On the first Sunday of each month he makes alone in a duck boat the water and land trek to Ebenezer Church. This is situated on what is known as “the Neck”, a narrow strip of land between the Atlantic Ocean and the Waccamaw River. To reach the church necessitates a six mile voyage down the Pee Dee, into Butler Creek, through “Pullfair” into the turbulent waters of the mighty Waccamaw. He can not cross this perpendicularly but must cross the strong tidal current transversely so that he lands on the opposite bank at various distances from the little wooden church in the pinelands. He starts walking but soon he is hailed joyously by some member of his church on the lookout

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for him and is transported along wagon roads through liberal green pastures and delivered to his flock.

Stimulated by the friendly greetings after a long silence of contemplation and struggle through the watery course, he preaches his sermon,, perhaps as he has prepared it the day before, but more than likely entirely extemporaneous. After service there is a feast of fried chicken, cold biscuit, cake, pie, coffee. Then a rest combined with visits outside in the pine grove with friends, and the day is closed with an afternoon sermon and singing of spirituals. As the sun forms a red disc Robert begins his long journey home through the marshlands to Barondel.

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At Christmas time a few years ago, the small Ebenezer congregation, in consideration of the advancing age of their beloved pastor, made him a proposition after much calculation on the part of the committee in charge of the finances of the church. They proposed to pay the 70 cents ferry fare and purchase three gallons of gasoline each month so that he might make the trip from Barondel in his old Ford and be spared the strenuous and at times dangerous route across the marsh and rivers. After listening attentively to the spokesman, Robert scratched his head, squinted his eyes and considered. It was a temptation, but among the images that flashed before his vision was the widespread want and need among his people.

"It make too much burden. I paddle and walk long as I kin," was his response to this offered boon. At sixty-eight he is still able to make the trip.

On other Lord's days Robert is in demand to preach at churches nearer home, churches of the Methodist as well as of the Baptist denomination.

Though it does not work out practically, in theory Robert receives one half of the desultory Sunday offerings - nickles, dimes, pennies - rarely quarters - which are placed meticulously

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by each individual giver on a white cloth spread on a table in front of the altar at the conclusion of the sermon.

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Sparse as is his share, a far smaller amount goes to the upkeep of the Carter family. Robert says that this is the Lord's money and that his position is only one of stewardship. As long as he can live from his other resources, he contributes this money to worthy causes - there is always some pressing need of the distressed among the "brethren" - or to the host church which is urgently seeking funds to repair a leaky roof, restore broken window panes, or install a new stove. Likewise when Robert "funeralizes" a neighbor or a member of his congregation or when he officiates at a marriage, he never charges a fee, either to the bereaved or to those about to "pleasure themselves".

First and foremost Robert depends upon his farming for a living. He relies upon his work as guide to sportsmen for purchasing clothing, equipment, and other necessities a small part is spent on his Ford.

He acted in capacity of guide for years to a millionaire who owns Rosebank Plantation adjacent to Barondel. Although this gentleman is now too infirm to come South on his annual hunting trips, Robert continues from year to year his place as watchman on Rosebank. This carries certain advantages beyond the free use of five acres on Rosebank to farm for himself without the usual payment to the landlord of the usual third of the scanty crops of corn and cotton. The additional hunting privileges and fishing rights over the thousand acres of rice fields is a matter dear to Robert's heart as well as advantageous to the larder. Game has been less and less abundant, but there is still enough for a huntsman's family when he has as keen an eye and as sure an aim as has Robert.

But Robert, like every other huntsman, knows that shells are an item to be reckoned with and cash must be found for them. This is not impossible [for him?] since the time that he requires them is the season when he is able to make money from his knowledge and

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experience. It is the business of Mr. Carteret, who owns Barondel, to cater to the needs of sportsmen. Robert is the most popular guide in an entire county given over largely to duck shooting and field sports. He is sought weeks in advance by swamp wise hunters from Maine to South Carolina. Whenever those "durbax" clad men make their appearance in low country, he earns from two to three dollars a day on an average in addition to generous tips, gifts of clothing, tobacco, and spirits.

In the summer, when there is an occasional [guestsinterested?] in casting or "bobbing" for the big mouth bass which are in abundance in the rice fields ditches, Robert [?] an occasional dollar at a season, when cash is very scarce, serving as guide. Then there is always game and fish that he is able to procure for his own table from the generosity of his patrons. It is a law of the low country that the Negro guide is entitled to all 18 fish except game fish, and to all small animals killed as target. Then when the guide adroitly captures a cooter for stew, no one could object.

Between the hunting season and fishing Robert finds ample time to attend to his farming. This assures the family of an abundance of green vegetables, of which okra, collards tomatoes, turnip greens, and butter beans are the favorites. There is also cow peas to be dried for winter use, corn for chicken feed and grits hominy for the family, and sweet potatoes to be preserved for the winter. Then there in the most important crop, the watermelon, in which Robert takes greatest pride.

Like every other farmer, Robert has good and bad years, but not long ago he suffered a major disaster when a storehouse on Rosebank Plantation burned to the ground, having caught fire from the universal Negro custom of yearly burning off the fields and woods. In the fire Robert lost not only the year's crops, but his seed for the coming spring, his tools paid for over a long period of time, and his precious horse. That was before the time when the government would lend assistance to a farmer in such a plight. It was a weary pull before the preacher could get back on his feet and probably would have been impossible had the hunting been as poor and the season as short as the past few years.

Besides his household possessions and the old Ford, Robert's assets, though greater than that of his brethren on an average, are small. They consist of a homemade duck boat as necessary to him as his feet, a raw-boned sorrel horse which he pastures on Rosebank, a few pigs, and a house in Martha Village, the colored community two miles distance. The house is rented out for a small sum to a needy family.

Robert does not interest himself in partisan politics, though world's affairs are his great concern. He keeps himself surprisingly well informed concerning world events and holds definite viewpoints as to the right and wrong of nations and cliques. He applies himself as religiously to the reading of the "Literary Digest", to which he has long been a subscriber, as to the study of his Bible. Then when in the winter when there are Northern guests at the "Big House" he is given discarded copies of the New York Times and occasional periodicals. These are a source of real delight to this Negro. Yet he is apparently little influenced by them either in his desires or in his beliefs. He says that he would like to go to New York but that nothing could induce him to remain there. He has no desire to ride in an airplane. He declares that he does not care to go over twelve miles an hour in an automobile - those who choose to exceed that may pass him!

Two of Robert's favorite mottoes are:

"Live and let live".

"Nigger business is nigger business and white folks business is white folks business and the two doan mix."

He has erected certain standards of behavior which he expects of white folks. As to familiarity occasionally encountered from a white hunter from another section of the

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country, such as back slapping, Robert shakes his head with the comment that such is not "our kind o' ways."

Robert went through some privations to see that his eldest daughter, a quiet and well mannered girl, should have the best schooling offered in the county. To accomplish this he had to board her in Georgetown thus depriving himself of her services at home at a time when they were needed. Because of her training and her intelligence, she was able to get a place to cook paying six dollars a week where the usual beginner could only expect three dollars. She held this place giving perfect satisfaction until she married. She choose a husband entirely satisfactory to her parents.

Robert's youngest girl seemed to personify all the faults of the younger generation. She was interested primarily in running to Martha Village and spending her time with other idle girls and boys. She attended every festivity there.

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When the brass band made its bi-annual appearance there she could out-dance all her friends. Robert made no effort to send this girl to school as he had her sister, but he did use much persuasion - even flogging- to see that the over-grown girl in her teens stayed in school another year beyond her wishes.

"I wants her to have enough education to be able to defend herself", he would say. After a term during which she could hardly have learned so much, Irene succeeded in marrying a pleasure loving youth from Martha Village with a "sunset wedding" in the Barondel Street. Her husband is a good worker and provides her with a very good house which she keeps in better order than one ever suspected she would.

The real problem in the Carter family was "Boy", a well set up youth with a pleasing manner like his father but without the father's stability. "Boy" has an excellent tenor voice. For years he has led the quartet at neighborhood churches where his father occasionally preached. Robert says he is proud of him. With his quartet he lends as much emotional

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tempo to the gatherings as his father does with his sermons. But since early childhood “Boy” has had “sticky fingers”.

When he was but ten years old, because of his ability to please and his good manners, he was taken as houseboy into the Big House.

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The boy so chosen is the envy of the other boys in the area, for he not only get a dollar a week, but is fed out of the white folks' kitchen. This meant ice cream, cake, chicken, lemon meringue pie, ambrosia, and goodies unknown to the plantation Negroes, being the recipient of generous tips from Northern guests.

The houseboy's duties are to bring in the wood, make and attend fires, polish brass, run errands for the cook and for the guests. How long “Boy” managed to get away with petty thefts, no one knows, but at length one day a ten dollar bill disappeared from the dresser just after it had been left there by a hunter with a good memory. The culprit was caught, confessed, and was let off after promising never to do such a thing again. His mistress was kind and really liked the little houseboy.

But there were several such happenings and “Boy” had to be dismissed. He was then almost a man in statue and got work in a country store. The fingers continued to be sticky” and the storekeeper, not so kind as the mistress of Barondel, called in the sheriff. The preacher had to employ his best persuasion and his reserve fund to keep his son from the chain gang. The same thing happened again when “Boy” went to work in Georgetown. He had now acquired a bad reputation, and no one wished to hire him. He roamed the countryside a continual source of worry to his father.

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But one day something happened. A family from the East with a Southern background, moved into the overseer's cottage with a two year's lease. Robert's daughter was taken on as cook and “Boy” as butler. Mrs. Thomas had been warned of the “sticky fingers”

by her friend, the mistress at the "Big House", but she had a peculiar belief in the innate goodness of human nature. "Boy" turned out to be a treasure to her and the household could not have run without him. People throughout the countryside began to believe there was some mistake about the Negro lad, or that the threfts were only a youthful mischance. When the Thomas family returned East, "Boy" was able to get work with his step-brother who served as cook in the kitchen of a Northern millionaire, who owns a plantation in the county. On one of "Boy's" visits to his father on Barondel, he was offered by a guest from New York 25 dollars a week and all expenses paid to New York to study with a famous Negro choir. He turned down the offer with great disdain explaining that he worked for his living and was not the trifling sort of nigger who went around singing for a living.

Now that all the children are married, Robert and "Maum" Sarah are left alone in the cabin on Barondel. "Maum" Sarah has been able to give up her place as cook at the "Big House" where she for so many years lorded it over white and black alike.

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It is not likely that she would have given up that office had she not become too ill to continue the work, and even then it was more like an amputation than a resignation, for she dearly loves her "white folks".

Now she confines her activity to keeping a cheerful home atmosphere for her partner and being sure that there is hot tea or coffee and wholesome food always on hand for the man who, despite the weather, when the tide is right continues to go out into the watery marsh lands clad in hip boots with the faithful blue slicker thrown over his arm "for insurance". She does not miss the five dollars a week which she earned and the ample "left overs" from the white folks' table which came in so handy when there were more mouths to feed. Her only worry is that Robert's eyesight is daily growing worse, and there in the country there is no remedy for it. Otherwise the Carters find little of which to complain. Indeed, as compared to the standards among the other plantations "street" residents and those of Martha Village and other such villages, the Carters live in a state of affluence.

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Opposite the Carter cabin is that of John Sanders and his wife, Bessie, a comely "high yellow" with almond shaped eyes. The woman is not from plantation stock but was imported from a fairly distant pineland village. At the moment the main objective of the couple seems to be breeding. However it is 25 likely, that John will eventually make a good man on the plantation. John is the oldest of "eleven head" belonging to a well respected Negro couple living in the Rosebank street. The father is a good farmer who rents on shares, and the mother a Negro woman of exceptional amiability.

John is employed as a farm hand by Mr. Carteret. He is paid five dollars a week. That is the sole income of the family except a few dollars extra that Mr. Carteret allows John to make during the hunting season when a guide is in demand and he has no urgent farm work awaiting him.

Mr. Carteret says he hopes that some day John will develop to the point of being able to take over the place of "headman" on the plantation. This is now held by an ageing man dwelling in Martha Village. At present John does the milking, the feeding of the cattle, and field work. In addition he is an excellent driver and can be entrusted with the master's car in case of an emergency.

Mr. Carteret allows John skimmed milk for the babies, plenty of potatoes, corn to be ground into hominy, cow peas, and other surplus from the garden. In addition John must get from the country store weekly supplies of "side meat", sugar, lard, syrup, dried mackerel, canned tomatoes, tobacco, and cracked rice which is purchased in one hundred pound bags at around 2.55 cents. Coffee is a rare luxury. In addition there is clothing to buy and Bessie must have a "dress up" outfit 26 each summer and winter.

The Carterets look with unseeing eye at the miserable yellow cur coon dog tied supposedly out of sight under the cabin. It is against the plantation rules for the Negroes to keep a dog in the "Street". From the appearance of the dog,, there are few table scraps.

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Bessie once had a job as a nurse to a baby belonging to a plantation guest, but she was totally unsatisfactory. Now she has so many babies herself that she can do little else than look after them.

The furnishings of the house are shabby and unkept. The woman is in no sense the homemaker. The chief diversion of the couple when together is listening to a cheap phonograph. A child cries. "He blow for he bone", John yells at Bessie, and continues playing/ the jazz record, sending his wife to nurse the wailing little yellow infant.

In the smallest of the cabins dwells "Maum" Sarah's successor at the "Big House", Eva Bellows, a strapping handsome woman still under thirty years. Eva's story is typically a success story. She lives the life of a modern bachelor girl. A really field Negro, she was taken very young into the home of a resident of a pineland village. Her mistress belonged to an aristocratic family but had little to give her servant other than excellent training.

27

Eva stepped from this cottage in the small village to what is considered an excellent place, for not only is there the five dollars a week wages, but at times there are liberal tips from the guests. Eva is given two weeks vacation in the summer. In addition out of pure appreciation for having found a worthy successor to "Maum" Sarah, the mistress of Barondel had allowed Eva to take her pick of the furniture stored in the old "Sick House". Eva has furnished her cabin exceptionally well and hung it with colorful drapes and curtains until it is the envy of every Negro woman who looks upon it. But few women have this opportunity, for Eva's time is limited and what she has to spare of it is given over to keeping company with George Ware, who has a large green Buick which he puts at her disposal. His son act as chauffeur. The mother of the boy is still living. On Saturday nights Eva's cabin is filled with gaiety and the tones of her new Victrola are restful to the ear as contrasted to the squeaky sounds that come from the one at John and Bessie Sanders' house.

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Eva has with her for company John's little brother, Sammy, who is houseboy at the "Big House". He sleeps on a cot in the little shed room. On Sundays he is allowed to go home to see his mother, but the rest of the week he is contented with Eva.

28

In by far the most tumbled down and unkept of the cabins dwells alone the Natural, "Sundown." Until a few years ago his feeble-minded mother, a "charity Negro" all her life, lived in the house with him but separately, mother and son hiding their rations from one another. With a combination of small change hoarded from infrequent work at 35 cents a day picking peas or hoeing, Betsy contrived to keep her burial insurance paid up to date so that at her death her family were able to give her a big funeral.

Sundown's identity is interwoven with that of the Barondel Street. It is not likely that he could fit harmoniously into any other social unit.

Sundown derived his name from a childhood habit. It was his custom to play with the four little whitesboys at the Big House, a silent pawn in their games, due to his inherent shyness and an impediment of speech. Whenever the sun set, the little "natural" would crawl under the nearest shelter barn, wagon, or stoop - and fall into deep slumber. Marse Legare, his own age, dubbed him "Sundown" and "Sundown" he has remained. He led a very happy childhood playing with his idols, the four little white boys. He fed from cabin to cabin, or from the kitchen of the "Big House", wherever he happened to be. To ride in the wagon was Elysium..

29

This blissful existence came to a sudden ending one day at the beginning of Sundown's thirteenth year. While riding a "hobby horse" to the nearest village on an errand for his mother, he was overtaken by a couple of men in a wagon. They offered him a ride. Desire overcame furtiveness, despite the rough appearance of the white men. His new acquaintances it turned out were nothing more than kidnapers - distillers of illicit liquor

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from the depths of Hell Hole Swamp, a famous South Carolina bad lands. There they transported him to their two room shack shared by cursing women and a parcel of half-nourished children. Spurred by the whiplash, the little Negro was forced to work long hours each day. At night he was chained to a knob of one of the many cypress trees that enclosed entirely from the outside world the fastness of the bootleggers. Often at night the water rose to his resting place and he stayed miserable and helpless in muck and slime. He lived in this Hell for eight years, but eventually made his escape and found his way back to Barondel.

One cold winter's night as the headman was making his way home after an expedition into the marsh with a duck hunter, he heard a pitiful whimpering along the side of the Barondel Avenue. He followed the sound and turned the light of his lantern upon the wretched form of Sundown. Only the appraising eye of one who lives close to nature would have recognized the 30 little Negro now grown to man's statue, though a bent and twisted figure. The headman carried him to "Maum" Sarah who nursed him back to health. The Negro's wrists still bear the scars from the chains that he wore about them those eight years.

The headman took upon himself the responsibility of Sundown. He taught him slowly but thoroughly how to plow and herd the animals. In time he came to be proficient in his tasks. Though Sundown never learned to count to three he had a personal relationship with each animal on the plantation so that if any one of the sixty-odd cows, hogs, or numerous sheep fail to appear at feeding time, he goes to Mr. Carteret and makes known to him by inarticulate mutterings, the absence. Distress is written in his face.

Despite his moron status, Sundown's impediment in speech would have prevented him from making a living in the cities. Even as a child/ when sent on an errand he would barge past the person to whom he addressed himself and deliver the message, a blob of Gullah, over his shoulder. His shyness was a partial cause for this, but fear nailed the habit so that it was to mark him for life.

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Few on the plantation would understand him - only the headman, Mr. Carteret, Robert's daughter Irene, "Maum" Sarah, and a mule, one of the most obstinate of its breed.

31

Sundown named it Mary Mule and apparently loves it as a man would love his sweetheart. No one else on the plantation had been able to handle her since the day that one of the young masters had shot a gun from her back. She had been utterly useless from that time until after Sundown returned from Hell Hole Swamp. She allowed him to lead her about, to plow her, to hitch her to the rickety wagon to haul fodder from the fields, pine needles from the forest to the barn, and to take the family wash weekly to Martha Village. He bossed her and she wheedled him - even out of his scanty supply of tobacco. Together these two outcasts earned their board and keep. While Mr. Carteret pays Sundown no money, weekly he brings him his supply of groceries from Georgetown. At Easter he himself chooses Sundown's outfit and he has a miraculous understanding of the colors that will appeal to the Negro. These gaudy clothes, and his mouth organ to which he dances in a staggering unrhythmical unbalance are his pleasures when Ma'y Mule is abed.

Medical attention is practically unheard of in the Barondel Street. A mid-wife is frequently called in to deliver Bessie of a baby. Except for "de fever" with which every Negro resident is stricken now and again, there is no illness, and who ever heard of going to a doctor for "de fever"?

32

Everybody knows that you just have to find 25 cents for a bottle of "R R R"! Sundown has dizzy spells at intervals but these are apparently functional and arise out of his childhood handouts from the Big house kitchen. Whenever he is seized with one of the attacks, so violently that he cannot work, his mistress gives him a little sweetened water colored pink from a bottle and orders the cook to give him a large plate of food. He is soon back at work.

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That is just one way that his ninety-five pound white mistress ministers to him. Twice in the past five years, his former captives from Hell Hole swamp have attempted to recapture him. Once they laid wait for him on the neighborhood road near Barondel gate which was fortunately left open by mistake by some guest. On that occasion, Ma'y Mule was the saviour but on the second visit the role fell to the mistress of Barondel herself. The rough men drove up into the Street. She investigated the presence of the strangers and with her gun and her wits drove them from the place emptyhanded though they had great ropes in their car with which to bind the Negro.